

# Exhibit 17

Message

**From:** Carla Panzella (She/Her) [carla.panzella@pitt.edu]  
**Sent:** 2/6/2025 9:11:09 AM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**CC:** Karin Asher [karin.asher@pitt.edu]; DaVaughn Vincent-Bryan [davaughn.vincentbryan@pitt.edu]; Nabors, Marlin U. [MarlinNabors@pitt.edu]  
**Subject:** Re: Student Conduct Process Follow Up

Dear [REDACTED]

Thanks for your email and for your concern for all students.

As student government members, you are aware that student conduct necessitates respecting the privacy and integrity of ongoing investigations. However, I want to affirm that the conduct proceedings are an unbiased, educational process designed to uphold community standards and the Code of Conduct.

It is also worth noting that in order to ensure the University is able to fulfill its mission of teaching, learning and research, the University maintains the right to regulate and monitor the time, place, and manner in which events may occur. These restrictions are content-neutral and applied consistently. When those restrictions are violated, conduct proceedings will occur. Any assertion or suggestion that the University is not following its policies or procedures or has a bias in this student conduct hearing are unfounded.

Like you, the University aims to upholding Constitutionally protected rights to freedom of speech and expression, as well as remain committed to fostering an environment of respect and concern for others. We unequivocally denounce antisemitism, islamophobia, and all forms of hate.

Thank you again for your email and sharing the concerns you heard. We share in the goal of supporting all students, and I look forward to working with you collectively as we traverse complex topics challenging our community.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Panzella

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 4, 2025 at 7:34 AM  
**To:** Carla Panzella (She/Her) <carla.panzella@pitt.edu>, Nabors, Marlin U. <MarlinNabors@pitt.edu>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] Karin Asher <karin.asher@pitt.edu>, DaVaughn Vincent-Bryan <davaughn.vincentbryan@pitt.edu>  
**Subject:** Student Conduct Process Follow Up

Dear Dr. Panzella and Dean Nabors,

We wanted to follow up on the statement SGB released last Saturday regarding the disciplinary process that Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) has been involved in. We have encountered several concerning details surrounding this process but felt it would be inappropriate to address them publicly in our statement, and we

recognize the time constraint of today being the SJP hearing. While our statement outlined broader concerns about the student conduct process, we also have specific questions and concerns about the disciplinary process that we would like to bring to your attention.

We were initially confused by the alleged conduct violations against SJP. It seems that the primary concerns raised by the complainant stem from the Hillman study group that took place last semester. From what we can tell, this gathering was functionally identical to study sessions that numerous other student organizations have taken part in inside the library, (e.g. FSL organizations). Very often, the student groups engaging in these sessions will bring in some type of signage, utilize the whiteboards, and rely on spaces within the library that are non-reservable for student organizations. Given this, we hope to clarify what distinguishes this study group from the many others that have taken place under similar circumstances without obstruction.

Additionally, we wanted to know if—when Hillman policies *are* violated—it is standard protocol to bring a Pitt Police officer to help address the matter. We understand that the Hillman Library has employees whose job is to enforce library policies, such as food restrictions, but we did not realize that police involvement is a part of this process. Despite the extensive time that the members of our Executive Board have spent in the library, none of us have witnessed a police presence in response to the functionally similar events we mentioned earlier. Is there a particular reason that the police were brought to this study group rather than the other events of an almost identical nature? Did the students allegedly involved in this gathering request the presence of police officers, or did Student Affairs make that decision?

Our last point of confusion is the application of the Student Code of Conduct clause 19k, which states:

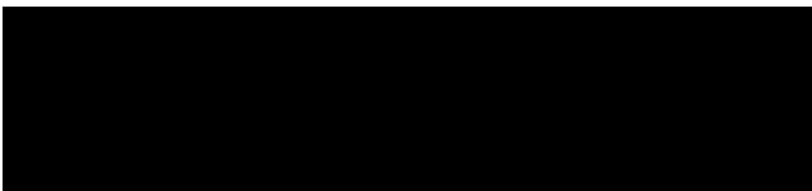
*“Violates or assists in the violation of any policy, procedure or guideline of the University including, but not limited to the follow: (k) Any other policy, procedure, or guideline of the University whether or not listed in the Code.”*

This broad and somewhat ambiguous clause appears relevant to various other grievances that we, as well as other students, have brought to the attention of Student Affairs. For instance, when Turning Point hosted an event last semester featuring Charlie Kirk—where students were subjected to slurs and had an obstructed ability to enter or leave their dorms—we were informed by Student Affairs that no actions could be taken against this organization. The existence and application of this line in the Code of Conduct gives the impression that there are, in fact, provisions within the Code of Conduct that can be used to bar student organizations from having a presence on campus. We are confused, though, why this line is being applied against students studying in Hillman instead of being used to prevent hate crimes against students. We worry that applying this interpretation of the Code of Conduct to SJP—while not holding other organizations, which in our view have had a more direct and harmful impact on students, to the same standard—sets a dangerous precedent. It suggests that the University is more willing to enforce this clause against student organizations that challenge certain *opinions* within the student body and administration, rather than against those that actively endanger the safety and *existence* of students. We find it hard to accept that Student Affairs views the alleged involvement of SJP in studying at Hillman as more actionable than other student organizations perpetuating hate crimes against students. If the Code of Conduct can be enforced in one situation and not the other, we worry for the students on this campus who are more often targeted by discrimination and hate.

Our statement detailed our concerns with the actual process that the SJP co-presidents have endured in the last few weeks, and we will save you the time of us bringing that up again now. We simply want to emphasize that the University should prioritize the academic and extracurricular success of its students, and give them the tools they need to accomplish that. Giving two students, each of whom are taking full course loads, *days* to compile a defense against unclear violations—and failing to clarify the process through which these alleged violations will be disputed—sets students up for failure. It undervalues the students themselves and their contributions to the University through academics, advocacy, and tuition.

We hope that the University and all relevant administrators respect and value the students in SJP to the same degree that they value any other student on Pitt's campus. It is unacceptable for any student on this campus to feel as if the University is targeting them as a result of their advocacy and their identity. It is also unacceptable for the University to seemingly give more energy to disciplining minoritized students than to protecting them. We truly hope that SJP and its students can remain vocal, successful, and safe members of our campus community—and that the same Code of Conduct that has failed to protect them from discrimination will not deprive them of the platform to protect themselves.

Thank you for reading this lengthy email; we appreciate your time and consideration. Again, with this email we are trying to advocate for students who have come to us directly with concerns. We hope by relaying these concerns we can work collaboratively to support students and bring clarity to the situation. If any of what was referenced above is a standardized part of the conduct process, we would love to engage in further discussion about things and provide a student perspective on the experience. We look forward to actionable steps we can take together to continuously uplift all students in our community.



| Pitt Student Government Board

